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VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE



ALBERT STROUD

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

A VOLUME OF ORIGINAL POEMS

By ALBERT STROUD

ILLUSTRATED

The Journal Press  Coffeyville, Kansas

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Introduction

Many of the poems in this book have never been printed before, but a majority of them appeared originally in newspapers for which the author has worked for the past dozen years. They have been freely copied in a wide circle of exchanges, whose editors have been more than welcome to them. Only those are used here which are general as to subject matter, or which admit of revision, or those of recent production; for the "verse of the period," like news, rapidly deteriorates and what is of interest today is forgotten tomorrow. Some were written to satisfy a curiosity to see them in print, others to fill the demand for something to brighten up the front page. Their publication in book form came as an afterthought; for a premature dive into literature in his callow years satisfied the author for quite awhile. Still he looks back to the time of the launching of "Ancient Myths" (a take-off on Greek mythology) as a real adventure and nothing else that came of it is as highly prized as the sacred, blue envelope from Eugene Ware—one of the greatest poets the nation ever produced—containing the encouraging statement that "You certainly show talent and it will improve as you proceed." Ironquill, could you return from the land where all good poets go, long enough to be my critic for a second time, I wonder if you would say: "It has improved."

The Author.



A VERDIGRIS RIVER SCENE

Upon the shore that lined the Verdi's peaceful way—Page 25

BY ALBERT STROUD

Things We Ought to Know

There are plenty of poets who sling a good pen
When writing an ode to the flag of the free,
Who prate of the flowers that spangle the glen
Or tell of the damp-rolling, dark-foaming sea.

But where is the man with the gift of the muse,
Who can make all immortal, in story and song,
The things that we know and the things that we use
And the things that we want as we journey along?

There are slathers of stanzas on heroes of old,
Which tell of the feats of the army and navy;
But few of the glories have ever been told
That hang round a platter of chicken and gravy.

There are pale, sickly members of minstrelsy's clan
Who weep as they sing of humanity's fate;
But let them come forward and tell, if they can,
The way to grow hair on a shiny, bald pate.

There are epics unnumbered in every style
That tell how the planets chaotically clash;
But never a word on the use of the bile
Or a hint at the contents of boarding house hash.

Revising the Bible

"I'm sorely peeved," said Deacon Dobbs, when he
came home from church,
"I used to be a crackerjack on scriptural research;
I had whole chapters memorized which I would oft-
times quote,
I knowed the Bible so that I could sing it through by
note.

"But now they've got a new revise and everything is
changed;
The chapters and the verses are differently ar-
ranged;
And when the preacher reads a text it don't sound
right at all
For Hell is rendered "Ha-dees," "Gehenna" or
"She-ol."
And lots of sound opinions the church has held so
long
The new revision indicates to be entirely wrong.

"When some smart theologian who wants to win a
name,
Who's studied Greek and Hebrew till he worked his
way to fame,
Finds out us old time brethren has got him fairly beat
A quotin' of the scriptures, he rises in his seat
And moves to change the version that we relied upon
From the openin' of Genesis to visions of St. John.

BY ALBERT STROUD

"I reckon in a few more years the Book will be revised
Till all them ancient stories will be wholly modernized,
With Adam as a boozier who drank his apple-jack
And Sampson as a slugger who managed to come back;
With Noah as the captain of a steamer on the seas
Who caught wild animals for men who ran menageries;
And Moses, with a job press, upon Mount Sinai,
Will be printin' the commandments for the people standin' by,
While Jehu in his armored car with rapid firin' gun
Is chargin' heathen trenches from the dawn till set of sun."

BEAUTIFUL SNOW

I knew that it was coming the night before it came, for my rheumatically shoulder was threateningly lame; I went out on the walk to see the flakes descending over me, and watched them falling, falling—then I slipped and did the same.

Thou art a boon of nature, for thou wilt help the wheat and drive the nimble rabbit to his narrow, warm retreat. If I can track him to his den, I'll swat the beef trust once again; I'll take him home and eat him, for we haven't any meat.

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

Intensive Gardening

The cost of living is a fright
To folks who dwell in town
And experts figure day and night
On how to keep it down.

They tell us what we ought to eat
And how we ought to dress,
In paths of right they guide our feet
To save us from distress.

They have a sure, unfailing plan
That's bound to hit the spot,
If every woman, child and man
Will tend a vacant lot.

The gladsome spring will soon be here
When every one should go
And plant upon the front parterre
A sweet potato row.

Along the alleys and the streets
Would be a splendid place
To set out beds of early beets
And celery and mace.

We ought to fill the gutter spout
With rich and sandy loam
And plant the seeds of sour kraut
To brighten up the home.

Then forward, all ye lazy blokes,
Let's swat old H. C. L.,
Raise more of beans and artichokes
And less of weeds and hell.

Poetry and Weather

I wrote a little poem on the melancholy days
Which told of chill and foggy winds in many a dismal
phrase;
But still the golden summer lingered in the lap of fall
And the editor refused it for it wouldn't fit at all.
Said he: "Compose some stanzas about this lovely
clime
And bring 'em to the office and we'll use 'em every
time."

And so I sought the woodland wild, dressed in my
summer wear,
To draw some inspiration from the sunshine and the
air;
But ere I wrote a dozen lines about the bosky glen
A blizzard came and froze the ink within my
fountain pen;
The wind blew through my garments, so gauzy and
so brief,
My ears got blue and wilted like a frosted pumpkin
leaf;
I had to hire a plumber to come down to my place
And set the heater up for me so I could thaw my face.

My rythmical effusion I proudly took to town
But when the printer read it he calmly threw it down.
Quoth he: "That stuff you've written is sadly out of
date.
The trouble is you brought it in about a day too late."

The Kansas That Was

There was a state called Kansas, it's a place I used
to know,
And I'd like right well to see it if I knew which way
to go;
Its prairies they were level and as far as eye could see
There wasn't any house but ours, and not a fence or
tree.
We had a field of second sod where tumble weeds
would grow
And in the fall when they were dry I liked to watch
them blow.
They made the nicest herd of cows for little girls
and boys
Who didn't have—and didn't need—a lot of costly
toys.
We hadn't any berries so we made sheep-sorrel pie;
We sliced our pumpkins into strips and hung them
up to dry,
And in the winter they were fine, cooked with a
hunk of meat;
Those were the days when anything seemed mighty
good to eat.
The sunsets out in Kansas were not clouded o'er with
smoke
And when we went to take a walk there was no dust
to choke;
I could name a hundred reasons, as I live those times
again,
Why Kansas was a paradise for women folks and
men.
I ought to go back there once more, I thought I heard
you say;
Why, sure, I'd like to do it—but I never moved away.

BY ALBERT STROUD

The Warrior's Farewell

Old Tommy Hawk, the Injun Chief,
Lay dying in his lodge;
His squaw and children bore with grief
The blow they could not dodge.
He moved his lips, as if to speak
And beckoned with his hand;
His voice was just a timid squeak
They scarce could understand.
But when their faces they inclined
To where the warrior lay,
Upon his couch, to death resigned,
They heard him faintly say:

"I'm headed for the hunting ground
Where all good Injuns go;
Where bootleg whiskey ne'er is found
And joys immortal flow.
I'm going to quit this vale of tears,
This land that gave me birth,
Whose plains are grazed by shorthorn steers
That cover all the earth.
I long to chase the nimble deer
As in the days gone by,
To bid farewell to every fear
And wipe my weeping eye.

"Ere since the white man came this way
I have not had a chance;
He makes me raise alfalfa hay
And wear Prince Albert pants.
These rocky Oklahoma knolls
O'er which I used to climb

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

Are punctured full of six-inch holes
To Mississippi lime.
From countless wells the black oil flows
That fills them to the brink
And smites my classic Roman nose
With heap ungodly stink.

"I do not crave the yellow gold
They paid me for my lease;
I do not love the tanks that hold
Their million barrels of grease;
I care not for the motor car
With which the young braves sport,
For every time they roam afar
It lands them into court.
I've tried to love the paleface land,
Until it got my goat,
Where politicians grasp my hand
And bid me go and vote;
Where cost of living takes my breath,
Where doubts and fears arise,
Where bandits scare me half to death
And danger lurks in pies;
Where breakfast food is shredded
And doled out by the pound.
Farewell, vain world, I'm headed
For the Happy Hunting Ground."

BY ALBERT STROUD



"I'm headed for the hunting ground where all good Injuns go;
where bootleg whiskey ne'er is found and
joys immortal flow."

When Pa Goes Fishin'

My Papa takes some hooks an' string
An' goes a-fishin' ever' spring;
He gits some hoppers, bugs an' worms
An' things 'at creeps an' bites and squirms—
One crawled at me an' I was skeered,
But Pa, he aint a bit afeared.
He takes a box o' dirt or sand
And puts 'em in it with his hand.

Pa gets hisself a long, straight stick
An' hunts a place down by the crick
An' there he sets till nearly night
But hardly ever gits a bite.

One day I said to him I wish
'At he would catch a great, big fish.
Jest then his bobber bobbed around
And wiggle-waggled up and down,
But when he jerked it all he had
Was jest a ugly ol' craw-dad.

Another time he give a yank
An' lammed a catfish on the bank;
It tried its best to get back in
An' horned my Papa with its fin,
But still he helt it through the jaw
An' took a little piece o' straw
An' stuck it right into its head,
For that's the way to make 'em dead.

We took it home and skinned it nice
An' put it on some salt and ice.
That night I et a great big piece
'At Mama fried in bacon grease.

An Inalienable Right

Jim Jacobs read with much alarm
Of hyphenated skates
Who try to work their schemes for harm
On these United States.
Then in his patriotic breast
An angry passion rose,
So high it nearly split his vest
And tingled in his toes.

"These furriners," Jim Jacobs said,
"On mischief shore are bent;
They seem to have it in their head
To bust this gover'ment.
They leave their wives to do the chores
And pack in wood and cobs
While they infest our peaceful shores
And steal away our jobs.

"The men who guide the ship of state
Are ignorant as sin,
Or they would go and shut the gate
That lets these meddlers in.
Now, I am forced to pay a tax
That's bigger every year
Because I own some little shacks,
A work hoss or a steer.
Our children have to go to schools
And we must buy them books
Because we are a set of fools
Run by a set of crooks.

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

“The laws are made to help the rich
And keep the poor man down;
They even tell you where to hitch
When you drive into town.
And if you take a little nip
To chase dull care away
They grab the bottle off your hip
And lock you in the quay.

“The liberties our fathers prized,
For which they fit and died,
Have one by one been sacrificed—
Our goose is cut and dried.
The octopus has wrapped his claws
Around us tight and strong;
The country’s cursed by cruel laws
And every thing is wrong.

“But people who were bred and born
Beneath the starry flag
Have earned the right to toot the horn
And masticate the rag.
So when it comes to jerkin’ hide
From off the gover’ment,
We have no honors to divide
With any furrin’ gent.”

ENGLISH AS SHE IS NOT SPELLED

There once was a flying machine
That was run by a fellow named Grine;
It went up so high
It was lost in the skigh
And since then has never been sine.

BY ALBERT STROUD

Voices of the Night

Night, sable goddess, from her ebon throne
Had cast her mantle like an old, black sheepskin over
all the earth;
The watch-dog lay beneath the porch and gnawed a
bone,
The tired farmer snored for all that he was worth.

High on a limb the wide-eyed owlet sat and
screeched,
Although his high, falsetto voice was out of tune,
And shrieked in shivering, ghostly accents till it
reached
Up to the cold, refulgent, round-faced moon.

Upon the shore that lined the Verdi's peaceful way
A solitary bullfrog droned his sullen note,
As if the bugs and critters he had eaten through the
day,
Resentful like, were calling from his throat.

The playful pollywog doth now produce encircling
rings,
That on the river's rugged shore in angry billows
break;
Anon the speckled rooster cranes his neck and flaps
his wings
And bids the slumb'ring, snoozing, sleepy earth
awake.

Cadmus and Europa

The dragon's teeth that Cadmus sowed on Thebes' classic site produced an army all equipped to rush into a fight and had he not succeeded well and put the riot down there would have been nobody left to help him build the town. A youth whose name was Cadmus lived in Asia, far away; he had a little sister, so the Grecian legends say. Europa was the maiden's name and she was pretty, too, her hair was long and curly and her eyes were lovely blue. The gods looked down upon her and were jealous of her charm and so they sent a bull that way to work a scheme for harm. Europa climbed upon its back, like any kid at play, when lo, the creature ducked its head and carried her away, and that is all we know for sure about the little lass except that sailors out at sea saw beast and rider pass. Tradition says, however, that she reached the western shore and they called the country Europe, for the maid they saw no more. This bull con game grieved Cadmus much and sent him on a quest that lasted many weary years with little sleep or rest, and while he never found the girl, as back and forth he strayed, the country suited him so well he took a claim and stayed. But Cadmus had to live alone, nobody else was there, and he was often in the dumps and filled with sad despair. He longed to do some noble deed to make himself a name but in the wilderness alone he had no chance for fame. One day he met a dragon and it gave him quite a fright but he drew his trusty weapon and he killed it in the fight, which pleased the gods immensely and near to him they drew and they gave

him some instructions as to what he ought to do. They bade him pull the dragon's teeth and sow them all around and soon a horde of fighting men were springing from the ground and had he not succeeded well and stopped the fracas then his plans for building Thebes would have failed for lack of men. Long centuries have rolled around since Cadmus went away but Europe well might use him if he should return today. It seems that lately some one else has sown another crop of dragon's teeth and raised a muss that's awful hard to stop.

THE MELANCHOLY DAYS

The pools are fringed about with ice,
A bluish tint is on my nose;
I'm digging now to raise the price
Of heavy winter underclothes.
The leaves have fallen from the trees,
They lie in heaps upon the ground;
An achey pain shoots through my knees;
My overcoat cannot be found.
The ice man looks so sad and meek,
On him I do not deign to smile.
That frozen chunk I bought last week
I think will last me quite awhile.
But sad to say, when I begin
To see my ice bill shrink, alas!
I have to put the heater in
And pay just twice as much for gas.

Godiva Up To Date

Oh, Tennyson, immortal bard!
I read your poems by the yard.
And while I prize them at their worth,
I think if you were back on earth
And saw the clothes the women wear
You'd likely be compelled to swear
That it was genius misapplied,
When you composed Godiva's Ride.

Your heroine rode through the town
And didn't even wear a gown.
But golden tresses, rightly placed,
Are thicker than a seemore waist;
And had the men exposed an eye
As she was calmly riding by
One leg was all they could have seen
For Dobbin's hulk was in between;
But now, when we look anywhere,
'Tis nothing strange to see a pair.
And Peeping Tom—unlucky soul—
Would not have bored an auger hole
And rubbered through it from his den,
Had he lived now instead of then.

Godiva rode the taxes down
In Coventry, that ancient town;
But now it's just the other way,
Our bills are higher every day.
In summer heat or winter frosts,
The less they wear, the more it costs.

BY ALBERT STROUD

The Weather Grouch

One day I heard a fellow cussin' Kansas;
The weather at that time was somewhat dry.
He was stringin' out profanity by stanzas
And swearin' by the ridge-pole of the sky
That there never was a time in all her hist'ry
When the state was damp enough for man's abode,
And to him it was the deepest kind of myst'ry
Why folks would live where nothin' ever growed.
I met that same old grouch some two weeks after
When every thing was soaking in the rain,
When all the world was filled with song and
 laughter,
And found that he had altered his refrain.
Of course he still was chawin' and a-cussin',
For he was one you couldn't satisfy.
This time it was a rainin' and a mussin'
When he preferred to have it clear and dry.
He said in all his forty years of livin'
In Kansas he had never failed on grain;
But he had a very definite misgivin'
He was goin' to lose his crop because of rain.
For it always het his wheat before he thrashed it
And sp'iled his corn before he shucked his crop.
But his story made me tired as he rehashed it
And I bade him go and tumble in the slop.



Small Potatoes

When the Autumn winds are sweeping
And the cold chills come a-creeping
Up my back-bone and my wish-bone and my funny-
bone and all,
Then to me there comes a question,
Just a sort of slight suggestion:
“Where are all your summer wages; what have you
laid up for fall?”

Then I say, “O, beg your pardon,
I have quite a bit of garden.”
And I straightway sail toward it with my tater fork
and hoe;
I explore the ground for tubers
And I search my patch for goobers,
But on close investigation I perceive they did not
grow.

Vines and stalks are there in plenty,
But there is not one in twenty
That produced a single thing to eat, the summer was
so dry;
True, those later inundations
Raised a crop of indications,
But I find there's nothing to them and I sadly pass
them by.

Then should I be disappointed—
Let my feelings come unjointed?
No, for in my observations I have always found it so.

BY ALBERT STROUD

This big world has many people
Who run all to stalk and sepal,
Bright green leaves and flowery petals, anything to
make a show.

Like my rows of bum potatoes
And my crop of fake tomatoes,
When you make a close inspection, you are filled
with deep disgust.
After calm investigating,
After you have got their rating,
You have found them small potatoes, buried 'neath
the clods and dust.

KATE BENDER DEAD AGAIN

My eyes are brimming o'er with tears
My heart is full of woe;
An old time friend went up the flume
A day or two ago.
Kate Bender was this maiden's name,
You've heard it o'er and o'er;
The hand of death has laid her low
A dozen times before.
I know I should not weep and wail
Nor shed the briny tear,
For Katy will come back to earth
And die again next year.

Striking It Rich

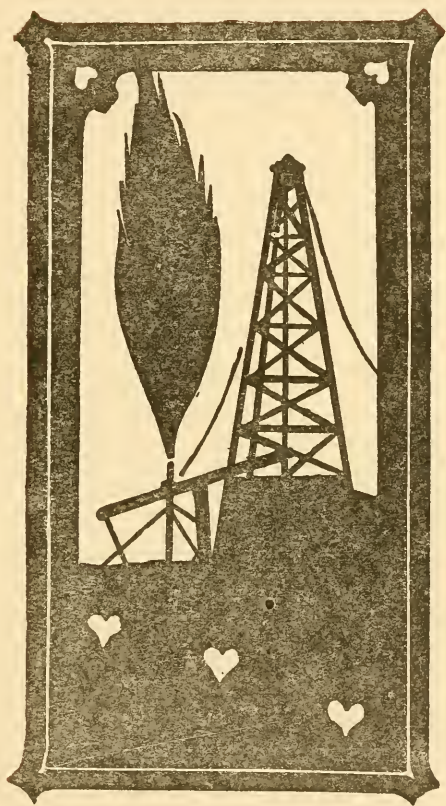
He used to wear patched overalls and eat the plain-
est fare,
His horses and his cattle were mostly bones and hair;
He had a little mortgaged farm but could not make
it pay
Because his land would not produce sufficient corn
and hay.

At last, when hope herself had fled, he gave a drill-
er's lease
And soon was wading through a stream of black and
fragrant grease.
He traded off his crowbaits and his skinny sow and
pigs
And filled his lots and hog pens with a dozen drill-
ing rigs.

He sold his shackly road cart and bought a motor
car,
He wandered over Europe and he stopped in
Zanzibar;
He traveled all about the earth by air and sea and
land,
From Greenland's icy mountain to India's coral
strand.

The while his nifty little yacht across the ocean
steams,
His hours are filled with peacefulness and in his
nightly dreams
He floats to some enchanted isle, where comes no
thought of toil,
Within an atmosphere of gas, upon a sea of oil.

BY ALBERT STROUD



He traded off his crowbaits and his
skinny sow and pigs, and filled his
lots and hog pens with a
dozen drilling rigs.

When the Worm Turned

I spaded up the garden in the early days of spring and I planted it to celery and beets and I thought the cost of living to the bottom I would bring when the time was ripe for every kind of eats. But the chickens saw me toiling with the pitchfork and the hoe and the rooster winked and beckoned to the hens and for forty blocks around me they came marching in a row from the stables and the poultry house and pens. Oh, they landed in that garden like a fierce, avenging sprite that the fantod or the jim-jam oft begets and they dug from early morning till the sun went down at night and they filled the air with dirt and onion sets. With an eye to things esthetic, I went out upon the lawn and I planted hollyhock and buttercup but my heart was filled with longing ere I saw another dawn for the life-blood of my neighbor's brindle pup. He had issued invitations to the other dogs in town and they gathered in the gloaming by the score and they tramped my johnny-jump-ups and my bouncing-betties down and they left me feeling mighty sad and sore. Then I went to seeing crimson and I grabbed my blunderbuss that I'd loaded full of buckshot for the day when I feared that Kaiser William might be aching for a fuss with a real, fighting, Yankee Doodle jay. When the twilight fell at even on that scene of bloody strife there were chicken guts and feathers everywhere; of a dozen curs that lately had been brimming o'er with life there was nothing left but license tags and hair.

BY ALBERT STROUD

Damon and Pythias

When Damon was condemned to die
'Twas Pythias begged his life
And got for him a respite brief
To see his kids and wife,
Remained as hostage for his friend,
Who finally returned
And thus Old Dionysius, king,
A wondrous lesson learned.
They say the test of faithfulness
The monarch saw that day
Dispelled his hate and he allowed
The friends to go their way.
I question not the friendship
Of those men of Syracuse,
Perhaps you think it proven
So I'll not attack your views;
But evidence is lacking,
Quite competent, I deem,
To prove that their affection
For each other was supreme.
Did Pythias and Damon live
As neighbors on the street?
And did their wives belong to clubs
That tat and talk and eat?
Did Damon have a garden
And did Pythias have a hen
Which liked to scratch and would not stay
Within a coop or pen?
Could Damon's car run faster
Than his neighbor's Ford could go?
Were their children ever rivals
In a Better Babies show?
If affirmatory answers
To these questions are assigned
Then I'll concede their friendship
Was the everlasting kind.

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

Tell the Swiss Patriot

In Switzerland there once did dwell
A man whose name was William Tell.
He was a hero in the chase,
In war he always set the pace.
A crossbow was his lengthy suit
And when there was a turkey shoot
He always managed to be there
And carry off the lion's share.

As time went by fair Switzerland
Was pillaged by an Austrian band.
Old Gessler was a despot sour
And firmly held the reins of power.

The tyrant had a new plug hat,
The rim was stiff, the crown was flat;
It was the idol of his soul
And so he set it on a pole
And said to every sturdy Swiss:
"You'll have to stop and kneel to this."

When Tell came moseying along
And saw the supplicating throng,
He passed them by with haughty sneer,
Which got old Gessler on his ear,
And for this act of proud disdain
The tyrant bound him with a chain
And called the headsman with his knife
To terminate our hero's life.

But just to have some fun with Bill,
He planned a way to test his skill;
And so he took a little lad,
The only child the archer had,
And put an apple on his head
Then unto William gruffly said:

BY ALBERT STROUD

"I've often heard that thou canst shoot;
So blaze away at yonder fruit
And if thou hit'st it fair and square
And dost not touch a single hair
I'll loose thy bonds and set the free
For all thou wert so fresh with me."

Then Tell, with calm and steady eye,
Pulled up and let the arrow fly
And smote the apple through the core
And earned his liberty once more.

He almost fainted with the test
And when his friends unhooked his vest,
Out from its folds an arrow slid
Which he averred that he had hid,
The tyrant's worthless life to take
If fear had made his muscles quake
And he had missed the apple red
And shot his little boy instead.

This made Old Gessler awful sore
And Tell was put in chains once more
And locked within a prison old
Whose walls were damp and dark and cold.

One day the tyrant wished to take
A little journey o'er the lake;
He needed some good man to row
And so he made his prisoner go.

A storm came on, the boat upset
And all the crew got very wet.
Tell was the first to swim to land;
He seized a crossbow close at hand
And shot Old Gessler in the head
Till he was most extremely dead.
And all the people heard with glee
That Switzerland at last was free.

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

Down Where They Raise 'Em

I met an Oklahoma lad, he was eight years old, he
said ;

His eyes were blue, his face was sad, his hair was
tawny red.

I marveled much that I should meet, in such a region
wild,

A lad so innocent and sweet as this peculiar child.

"Whence goest thou, my little man?" I asked, and he
replied :

"I'm huntin' for my brother Dan to see if he has died.
Dan robbed a bank at Hoolagoo and as he turned and
fled

A marshal grabbed a thirty two and pumped him full
of lead.

"My dad and mam are gone to view them hang my
brother Bill

Because he shot a revenoo for snoopin' round his still,
And Pete and Tom are down the track a-holdin' up
a train ;

I wisht that they would hurry back, looks like it's
goin' to rain.

"My sisters Annabel and May left home this after-
noon ;

They took my leaden knucks away, my pewter bowl
and spoon.

They had a copper pot and cup and counterfeiter's
mould ;

I guess they're goin' to melt 'em up and coin 'em into
gold.

"They left me all alone at home and I am most afraid
So I set out afar to roam and hither have I strayed.
I guess I better hit the track ; I'm glad I met you, Boss.
I betcha I wont hoof it back if I can steal a hoss."

BY ALBERT STROUD

The Return of the Bustle

How dear to my heart is the hump of the bustle,
As mem'ries of childhood recall it again.
Its movement kept time to the silken skirt's rustle
And furnished an optical treat for the men.
The bustle, the bustle, the fat, bobbing bustle
That stuck out behind like a big, healthy wen.

The wide-spreading bustle they say is returning
And soon will be with us, our vision to cheer,
To gladden the hearts that so long have been yearn-
ing
And looking for old-fashioned things to appear.
The bustle, the bustle, let's get up and hustle
And welcome the first one we see drawing near.

The bustle of old, like the hump of a camel,
Adorned the fair maiden, her charms to enhance;
But the new one hangs down, all her movements to
trammel
Like slack in the seat of a big pair of pants.
But so it's a bustle, why care we a cussel?
Let joy be uncorked and go on with the dance.

A RESTAURANT TRAGERY

An eating house waiter named Lou
Let go of a dish of hot stou,
Which fell on a guest
And spoiled his vuest,
So the hasher was forced to skiddou.

A Western Romance

Bill Erp, the broncho buster,
Was a very valiant lad;
A pair of buckskin trousers
Were all the pants he had.

Bill went to town one evening,
A pint of booze to get,
Which made him fall into the creek
And got him very wet.

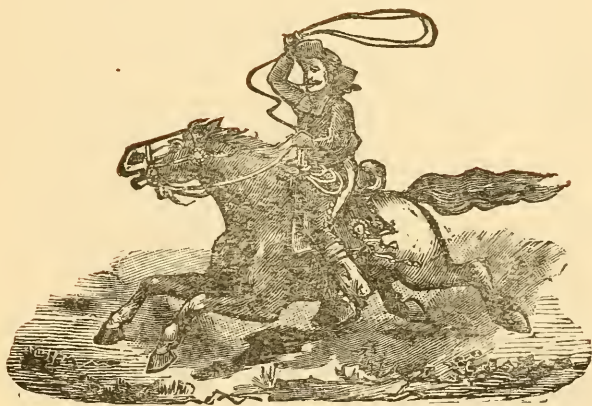
Now, when his pants began to dry,
The waistband tighter grew
And in the same proportion,
The legs grew shorter, too.

So Bill took off his breeches
And hung them on a limb,
Then watched them slowly fade away
Amid the twilight dim.

All night they shrunk while Bill lay drunk
And got so very small
That when he woke next morning
He had no pants at all.

Bill rode into the camp that day
With heart extremely sad
Because the buckskin trousers
Were all the pants he had.

BY ALBERT STROUD



Bill Erp, the broncho buster, was a very valiant lad;
a pair of buckskin trousers were all
the pants he had.

The Limit of Patience

An altruistic fellow
Is our good old Uncle Sam;
His fame is known throughout the earth
From Cuba to Siam.
He would spike the bristling cannon
If he only had a chance
And instruct the King of Seboo
In the art of wearing pants.
He's the very cream of patience
If things are going right
But when some one pulls his whiskers
He is mighty apt to fight.

He would feed the hungry millions
With his wealth of golden grain
And kid them when their hearts are sore
Until they smile again.
If they only tell their troubles
And patiently will wait,
We will rally to their rescue
While our Uncle pays the freight.
There's room for all the poor of earth
Within his ample lap,
But when some one treads his bunions
He is mighty prone to scrap.

He succored hungry Belgium
Whose land was torn by war,
He fought the epizootic
On the shores of Labrador,
He sent his Christmas turkeys
To the folks in Guadeloupe

BY ALBERT STROUD

To save our missionaries
When the heathen yearned for soup.
He's as peaceful as a Quaker
And detests the battle's din
But he'll fight his weight in wildcats
When the wildcat rubs it in.

His scholars and his statesmen
Have worked from day to day
To educate us in the art
Of giving things away;
Till we cut our daily rations
To hominy and prunes
And sent our eggs and bacon
To the starving Kameroons.
But when some husky bully
Starts in to run a bluff
He finds our Uncle isn't all
The tender-hearted stuff.

THE CALL OF DUTY

It costs us sixteen million plunks,
The college experts say
For insects that infest our bunks
And those that spoil our hay.
These figures are a sad surprise
Our hopes have fallen flat;
All season long we swatted flies
And batted at the rat.
It seems there is no rest at all
Vouchsafed to mortal plug
For now the battle cry rings out:
"Go forth and slug the bug!"

Who Are the Heathen?

And some there were who shed big tears
O'er loved ones, missing many years,
And others spoke of divers things
Like family spats and wedding rings;
Some asked the time to wean their pigs
And where to set their drilling rigs
And got their answers, cut and dried,
Then turned away quite satisfied.

BY ALBERT STROUD

The heathen down on Ganges' bank
May have some notions crude and rank
And it's all right to work and pray
And point him to the better way.
But while we want to treat him kind
And brighten his benighted mind,
Let's not forget the folks at home
Who harbor bats within their dome,
Who think an Oriental mutt
Who smears his mouth with betel nut;
Whose nimble back is often bent
To gods of reinforced cement,
Beyond this mortal vale can look
And read the future like a book.

OUT OF A JOB

The hobo paused before my door
And begged a bite to eat;
His cap was on wrong side before,
His shoes o'erflowed with feet.
"Whence all this misery?" I cried,
"Why dost thou hit the pike?"
He said "My goose is cut and dried,
Our union's on a strike."
"And what's your business, gentle sir?"
His answer made me laugh.
Quoth he, "I am a lineman for
A wireless telegraph."

Modern Robin Hood

In the days of old there were robbers bold
Who lived in a forest deep;
In a coat of mail with a tin-plate tail
They would safely go to sleep.

Their lives were free as a bumble bee
And they sang away all care,
They drank rich wines and they cut up shines
And they knew not a thrill of fear.

They robbed the lads with the surplus skads
And gave to the ones who were poor,
They rescued maids from the donjon's shades
And they took them home once more.

In these latter days, with our modern ways
A bandit has little show;
As he makes his haul a leaden ball
Is apt to lay him low.

In the days gone by he winked his eye
As he dodged the archer's skill
And his cast steel pants would safely glance
The missiles that sought to kill.

Now the sleuths and the cops are thick as hops
And they chase him around for sport;
His bean they slug and his face they mug
And they hustle him into court.

Then he goes to the pen with other men
O'er his ruined life to repine
And for ninety years weeps bitter tears
As he helps make binder twine.

BY ALBERT STROUD

The Neversweat

His health is good, his limbs are strong,
His voice is like a dinner gong,
He lifts a half a ton with ease
And he can eat a hoop of cheese.
But strange to say he will not work
Because he's lazy as a Turk.

At digging wells or splitting wood
He'd do the world a lot of good,
But something whispers to this chap
That some day he will strike a snap;
And so he loafs the whole day through
And nothing useful will he do,
Because he fears to soil his shirt
Or get his fingers in the dirt.

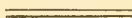
When first I met this man of ease
He had a rig for shelling peas,
But when he found no great demand
For such a jim-crack in the land
He organized a minstrel troupe
That dealt old jokes and lived on soup
And tried the people's joys to drown
Until they ran him out of town.

A dozen peaceful days passed o'er
Before I saw him any more;
And then he came, imploring me
To join the B. of X. Y. Z.,
A lodge that never asked for dues
And fed its members oyster stews
And paid a hundred dollars gold
For every time you caught a cold.

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

He platted town lots by the score,
On hillside rough and sandy shore,
But pulled his stakes and heaved a sigh
When no one came that way to buy.
He found a cure for rousy geese
And ran for justice of the peace,
But got a seat among the goats
And lost by forty thousand votes.

He always sports the best of clothes,
Though where he gets them no one knows.
He never tries to pay a debt
And is a patient Neversweat.
'Tis useless to repeat his name
Because you know him, just the same.
Search any town where'er you will,
You'll find a chap who fills the bill.



THE SUMMER APPETITE

There is nothing on earth that is half so capricious
As the old summer time appetite;
One day a man's stomach will act quite seditious
If he dares to take only a bite.
And the next day his food he so eagerly seizes
He cannot stop eating at all;
If shut in a house that was made of brick cheeses
He would eat a hole right through the wall.

Balak and Baalam

Balak was king of the Moabites and Baalam was his seer. The land was filled with Israelites and his heart was filled with fear. So Balak said to Baalam: "Go, saddle up old Jack and arm yourself with cuss words, to drive the sheenies back. We do not want them in our midst to peddle hand-me-downs and build their wretched hock shops in all our pretty towns."

The prophet started out to do his errand for the king, but on the way there happened a most peculiar thing; for as he slowly plodded through a rugged mountain pass, an angel stood before them and frightened Baalam's ass.

Then Baalam drew his trusty sword and hit the beast a rap and stuck his feet into its flanks and wildly yelled "Giddap!" The donkey raised its head aloft, as if it fain would bray and Baalam almost fainted when he heard it plainly say:

"I am nothing but a jackass, while you are very wise; but you'll have to give me credit for the keenest pair of eyes. If you could see what I can see out yonder in the path, I guess you'd be so mollified that you would curb your wrath. If you don't know any better than to act in such a style I think you ought to play the mule and let me ride awhile."

Wasted Opportunities

When I was but a little lad
I used to hate to hear my Dad,
Who oft would break upon my snores
With some remark about the chores,
Would bid me rise and cuff the mule
Before 'twas time to go to school.

To hear that word would make me squirm,
It was a most unwelcome term;
I longed to see the day appear
When I should reach my major year,
When all my school days would be o'er
And dreary lessons come no more.

While others wrote upon the board:
"The pen is greater than the sword,"
"The golden hours we must not waste
But seize the moments as they haste
Along the fleeting shores of time,"
Upon the seat I used to climb
And slap a gob of yellow mud
Against the ceiling with a thud.

And when the teacher's back was turned
I let my lessons go unlearned
And when she called us to recite
And tell the cause of day and night,
Or figure out how many cents
It took to build a yard of fence,
Or parse a noun or spell a word
I always blundered most absurd.

But I have seen the world since then
And met with educated men

BY ALBERT STROUD

Who wear their gold encircled specs
And pay their bills with mammoth checks
And own an interest in the bank;
While I, with stomach weak and lank,
Still wonder where I'll get the cash
To buy myself a plate of hash.

O, barefoot boy, with cheek of tan,
Improve the moments while you can
And fritter not the hours away,
But learn your lessons well each day.
For if you grit you teeth and try
Success will greet you by and by.



I used to hate to hear my Dad, who oft would
break upon my snores and make remarks
about the chores.

Propriety in Dress

Oh, father is a careless wight,
A sloven wight is he;
He sat out in the yard one night
Beneath the greenwood tree.

And mother's feelings much were hurt,
The family disgraced,
For naught except an undershirt
He wore above the waist.

Sufficient collar wasn't there
To hide his manly chest
And something like an inch of hair
Was showing on his breast.

But father has no modesty,
As you can plainly see,
To clothe himself so scantily
And sit beneath the tree.

When sister, charming little elf,
Sits out beneath the tree—
Well, I'd incriminate myself
To tell what you can see.

To say her dress is much too low
As well as much too high
Is quite a paradox, I know,
And may sound like a lie.

The hem is just about so high
And flaps her knees about,
Her bodice proves an alibi
And leaves her thorax out;

BY ALBERT STROUD

And when upon parade she goes
Along the village street
She has to walk upon her toes
Instead of on her feet.

But mother, while she does her bit
As keeper of the flock,
Is never known to throw a fit
Because of sister's frock.

JOYS OF SPRING

O, let us be gay for the spring is now here,
With its birds and its bees and its can of bock beer,
Its warmth and its sunshine so boundless and free,
Its sarsaparilla and sassafras tea.
I fancy I see, 'mid the emerald bowers,
A bevy of maidens out gathering flowers,
Until I discern that those bright fairy queens
Are filling a basket with turnip-top greens.
The wealth of the springtime now feedeth my soul
Like a hired man is fed from a full gravy bowl;
'Tis then that I love to stroll out in the glade
And bask in the willow tree's beautiful shade,
Or calmly repose on the flat of my back
And list to the mule whacker patiently whack.

When Zekiel Played the Fiddle

I went down town the other night and noticed on the
street

That folks was all excited and a-workin' of their feet;
I wondered what had happened to call out such a
throng

And so I fell in at the rear and sorter moped along.
I learnt from scraps of language that they dropped
along the way

That they was goin' down to hear a violinist play.
The price was pretty stiff for me—a dollar and a
half—

But I hadn't heard no fiddlin' since Brindle was a
calf,

So I marched in at the doorway and found a cush-
ioned cheer,

Away down by the platform where I could see and
hear.

When the curtain riz a feller, with a shock of
fuzzy hair,

Come out and made a little bow and acted mighty
quare,

And his manager informed us that the concert would
begin

And the party with the sneezy name would play the
violin.

I set there half an hour and a thinkin' purty soon
That he'd surely give us somethin' when he got the
thing in tune,

Until the folks begin to cheer and clap their hands
and smile,

Then I realized the concert had been goin' quite
awhile.

BY ALBERT STROUD

Well, if that is violinin', you are welcome to my share;

It was nothin' like the fiddlin' that was done by Zekiel Ware.

Zeke used to be my neighbor, back thar in Tennessee And he dealt the kind of music that was melody to me.

"The Irish Washerwoman," he could saw to beat the band,

And the one about the taters that growed in "Sandy Land";

He was shore a virtuoso on "The Gals of Arkansaw" And could make the ceilin' tremble playin' "Turkey In The Straw."

If that gourd got out of kilter he would take it 'twixt his legs

And twist and spit tobacker juice upon the wooden pegs

And tease it with the hoss-hair bow across the cat-gut string,

Till it give out strains harmonyus like the angels when they sing;

And the shell that held this soul of mine would bust right down the middle

And let it rise and fly away, when Zekiel played the fiddle.

THE LAST OF TIM

We are mourning for Tim

Who went out to swim,

Where the river ran close to the shore;

The water was damp

And it gave him a cramp,

And he'll never come back any more.

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

When Rover Runned Away

Our ol' dog Rover's runned away;
We aint saw him since yisterday.
He allus used to stand an' wait
To meet me at the little gate
When I got home from school at night;
An' now it don't seem hardly right
'Cause he don't come an' wag his tail
An' sniff around my dinner pail
An' beg me for a scrap of bread—
Pa says he's fraid Ol' Rover's dead.

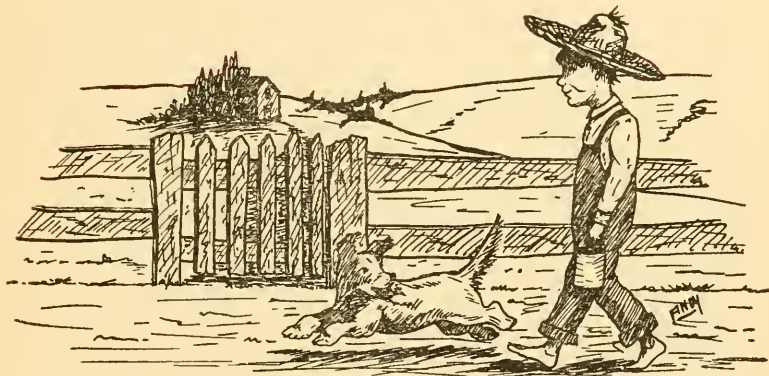
I git so 'fraid when it is dark,
'Cause I know he wont growl or bark
If things come round the place at night
Or ever' thing don't go jist right.
We had him seven years an' more
An' he aint done that way before.

He had the softest kind o' bed,
I made for him out in the shed;
It's gunny sacks, with lots o' hay—
An' now he's went an' runned away.
It might'a'been so lonesome, though,
That he jist thought he'd rather go
Where he could sleep with other dogs
Instid o' chickens, calves an' hogs.

I got a quarter, what I earned
For havin' all my lessons learned,
An' I would give it, ever' cent,
If I could know jist where he went.

BY ALBERT STROUD

It's gittin' dark all out o' doors,
Ma says it's time to do my chores
I'm 'fraid to go an' hunt the cow—
O' lookee! There comes Rover now! !



He allus used to stand an' wait to meet me at the little gate,
when I got home from school at night.

A Perverted Invention

The war planes now are flying o'er the warm Aegean Sea for the Greeks have been inveigled in the mighty jamboree and I wonder, as I ponder, what old Daedalus would say, the way his great invention now is used to maim and slay. Of course you've heard of Daedalus, the carpenter of old; he used to carp in Athens and the way the tale is told his fame had spread till Minos, who was kinging down in Crete, submitted plans and details for an engineering feat. A critter called the Minotaur was worrying the king, who couldn't think of any way to subjugate the thing; a cross between a nightmare and a wild-eyed wallaloo throughout the little island was the real bugaboo. It had fierce teeth and ugly claws and horns upon its tail, and Minos sent for Daedalus to build a monster jail. The workman took his little son, whose name was Icarus, to hand up nails and lumber and juggle bench and truss, and built a mighty Labrynth that wound so far about that suddenly he found himself unable to get out. But Daedalus, the genius, was a most resourceful cuss, so he built some flying doodads for himself and Icarus and soon they had ascended from that prison, grim and bare, and were trying out their prowess doing flipflops in the air. But Icarus was venturesome as most of boys will be and flew his little air craft above the Grecian sea. The wings were fastened on with wax which melted in the sun and he had a tragic ending to his frolic and his fun. Old Daedalus was saddened till he pined his life away, but probably it's just as well he is not here today. He surely would be mortified and filled with grief again to see his great invention used to swat his fellow-men.

The Would-Be Tax Dodger

A self important gentleman one evening in the spring
Upon a farm house doorbell most earnestly did ring;
The good man met him with a smile and bade him
enter in
And with his prompt acceptance their acquaintance
did begin.

Then, as the conversation for a moment seemed to
lag,
The stranger said: "In yonder field I see a sorrel
nag.
I pray thee tell me is he sound of wind and limb
and eye
And what's the price that you would ask of one who
came to buy?"

The farmer thought: "Now here's the chap who's
lookin' up the facts
Pertainin' to the property on which I'm payin' tax,
And if I say that Roger K. is worth two hundred
straight
They'll soak me worse than ever to run this durned
old state."

He cleared his throat and scratched his head, then
spat upon the hearth
And said: "You asked me, did you, what that sorrel
hoss is worth?
It is a puzzling question and I pause to answer you;
That's the hoss my father gave me when this country
all was new.
I keep him as a relic of the day that's past and gone;
It's been a dozen years since he has had the harness
on.

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

That spavin on his off hind leg unfits him for the
plow
And when it comes to action, he's as awkward as a
cow.
He stutters when he paces and he stammers when he
trots
And he's always got the colic or the stringhalt or the
bots—"

"Enough! Enough!" the stranger cried, and sadly
shook his head.
"My fondest aspirations they are busted now and
dead.
I have four hundred dollars stowed away here in
my pants
Which I longed to hand you for him had you given
me a chance.
I have a horse that matches him from muzzle down
to heel
And if your steed was young and sound we sure
would make a deal.

"But while I'm disappointed I'll try not to complain;
I have found the man Diogenes once sought for all
in vain.
You are an honest yeoman, I am very proud to say,
I'm delighted to have met you and now I'll say good
day."

The visitor departed and the farmer stood transfixed;
The thoughts that trooped across his brain were very
sadly mixed.
He sought the evening twilight and he roundly railed
at fate
And kicked about a dozen slats from off the garden
gate.

Looking on the Bright Side

Jim Jacobs aint the kind of chap to grumble and
complain,
No matter if the weather's dry or if it wants to rain.
He whistles when the creek is out and never seems to
fret;
"Oh, I dunno," is his response, "It aint so very wet."

In summer when the rains have ceased and people
are forlorn
And when they say the blazing sun is burning up
the corn,
Jim allus manages to shock the pessimistic swarm
When he observes "Oh, I dunno; it aint so very
warm."

While teaming o'er the Texas plains, way back in '88,
Jim lost the trail and lost hisself and lost his load of
freight.
He had no water for three days, but when relief
came by
Jim tipped the canteen up and said: "I wern't so very
dry."

One day, not very long ago, Jim suddenly took ill;
The doctor came and left for him a powder and a
pill.
His wife called for the minister to come and see him
quick,
But Jim demurred, "Oh, I dunno; I aint so very sick."

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

The good man came and plead with him to hastily
repent
Before he died and landed down where other sinners
went.
Jim smiled a little, sickly grin and raised up on his
cot
And feebly murmured: "I dunno; hell aint so awful
hot."

WOES OF THE WEALTHY

He spent his three score years and ten
In piling up a fortune,
And earned, as his reward from men,
Denunciations, scorchin'.
He was condemned for this and that,
Till on his nerves it grated,
And then was called upon the mat
To be investigated.
"Alas!" he cried, "Wealth brings no joys;
I'll dissipate these riches
And buy ten million ragged boys
A pair of Sunday breeches."
He scattered gold with lavish hand
And feelings much elated.
When lo, they called him on the stand
To be investigated.

A Plea for the Teacher

The school marm is a winsome maid
Who toils for meager pay
To edify some little jade
Whose mind is bent on play.
For half a year she saves and works,
Accumulating scads,
Then spends them in successive jerks
For books and other fads;
That she may better fitted be,
By summer institute,
To cultivate the young idee
And teach it how to shoot.

School is not what it used to be
When you and I were small;
Such useless things as A B C
Are hardly taught at all.
Kids learn to read right off the book
Before they learn to spell,
And little girls are taught to cook
And do the housework well.
The boys now find their daily task
Not half so dull and stale,
For nothing better could they ask
Than hammer, saw and nail.

The teacher works for meager wage,
But has to strive the more
To glean from off the printed page
Some forty kinds of lore,
That she may guide the young idee
Along the proper way;
And that is why it seems to me
We ought to raise her pay.

Work for the Booster Club

A maiden of uncertain years
Unto a Booster went;
Her eyes were filled with twinkling tears,
Her voice was cracked and bent.
She said: "I understand your club
Is working for the town,
To boost the cause of every dub
And keep dissension down.

"The city's merchants you protect
From aliens with their wares
And street car men are promptly checked
From charging monstrous fares;
But while you rave at Seerbuck-Ward,
It seems to me a bluff;
The idee hits me plenty hard
You don't go far enough.

"The principle is all O. K.,
I want to see it tried
Upon the chap who goes away
To get himself a bride.
There's lots of girls right here at home
Who do not have a beau,
And why young men for love should roam
Is something I don't know.
We are as good as those who dwell
In regions far away;
And yet it seems the foreign belle
Can beat us any day.

“So wont you, Mr. Booster Man,
Our interests protect
And try to formulate a plan
To have the practice checked?
For self alone you should not live
Your prospects to enhance;
But try to find some way to give
The home-grown girl a chance.”

THE PESSIMIST'S PLAINT

The world is full of peril, you can feel it in the air; you can tell it by Old Tabby's tail that bristles up with hair; there are dangers on the water, on the land and in the sky, for the ocean might slop over, or perhaps it might go dry. The earthquake and the cyclone beset us night and morn, the army worms and doodle bugs are eating up the corn, the atmosphere is laden with germs of every hue and comets are cavorting across the distant blue. Ah, little do I know the time when they may dash from space and drag their fiery tails across my unprotected face. My heart is filled with trouble and my eyes are wet with tears for science says the sun will cool in forty million years, the ice will form in solid sheets and cover all the earth and we'll have to wear our ear-muffs as we sit around the hearth. Although the things that haunt me have never happened yet, the dread suspense of what may come is why I moan and fret. I think I might be happy, and I would surely try, if I could be assured that I would live until I die.

The Ideal Season

I do not care to loaf around
When summer heat and droughts abound;
While others flee, their tasks to shirk,
I'd rather peg away and work.

The winter time is most too cold
The sights of nature to behold;
The dells have lost their boskiness
And cold winds fill me with distress,
And if I do go out to roam
I wish that I had stayed at home.

In spring there always is a flood
To turn the highways into mud
And if I poke along the creek
I get the chills and shake a week.
Beside there is a lot of chores,
Like setting hens and swinging doors
And weaning pigs and hoeing corn
To keep me busy night and morn.

But when the autumn comes along
That lazy feeling hits me strong,
'Tis then I want to steal away
From tasks that erstwhile seemed but play.
All interest I quickly lose
In dog fights, wrecks or other news;
And though I try from day to day
I cannot write a roundelay,
A sonnet or a pastoral,
A canticle or madrigal.

BY ALBERT STROUD

The woods are calling me to come,
The bumblebees are on the bum,
I want to roam the field and mere
And gaze upon the fatted steer
That hasn't anything to do
The whole delightful season through
But stand upon the river brink
And chew his cud and think and think.

I know where is an orchard old
With offerings of red and gold
And where the wild grape climbs a tree
And flings its challenges to me.
I know that when the sun is bright
The bass and bullheads still will bite;
And so I'll take my line and pole
And seek some deep and placid hole.
Grasshoppers now are on the wing
And lazily they hop and sing
All ready to accommodate
The chap who seeketh after bait.

September weather is serene,
The trees and grass are not so green;
I note already, here and there,
Some color combinations rare.
I hear the piping of the quail
And look with longing down the trail
That leads through glorious autumn days
And ends in Indian summer haze.

The Christmas Fiddle

The Christmas season was drawing near
And I wondered what I would get that year.
I wanted a change from ties and socks
And stand-up collars and kerchief box.
So I told my friends they could keep their pelf
And I would buy something to please myself.

The winter season was dark and drear
And I longed for music, my soul to cheer,
Some strains harmonic, so light and gay,
To enter and drive dull care away.

I remembered hearing, some time, some way,
That one of my ancestors used to play
With a skillful hand on the violin,
Way back in the days that once had been,
And the notion was so with reason fraught
That into my head there came the thought,
Since I was a sprout from the family tree,
His mantle had fallen, perhaps, on me.

So I sent a letter to Sawbuck Rear,
In which was an order that read: "Dear Sir—
I send you a dollar and thirteen cents,
For which you will ship me, at my expense,
One soft-pine fiddle and horse-hair bow
That are listed in catalog so-and-so."

Well, I got that gourd next year, by freight,
And I sawed it early and sawed it late;
I tackled "Dixie" and "Soldier's Joy"

BY ALBERT STROUD

And the mother's lament for her wandering boy,
And every time I would start to play
Some more of my neighbors would move away

When I ran the gamut in sharps and flats
It seemed the spirits of all the cats
That gave up their lives—and other things—
To furnish that fiddle a set of strings,
Would fill the twilight with shrieks and growls
And jar the nerves with their spectral yowls.

The price of lots in that part of town
Were finally forced and fiddled down
Till the owners declared when they learned the facts
That they would not keep them and pay the tax.

They took the matter up into court
And they dealt me a blow that destroyed my sport;
They made me go on the witness stand
And saw off a measure from "Sandy Land"
That the judge and the jury might hear and know
That all of the charges they made were so.

They dished me up an injunction suit
With a lot of damage and costs, to boot,
And the court observed as he looked me through:
"I find these charges are all too true.
Go home and see if you can't be good
And bust that box into kindling wood.
Your playing sounds like the Banshee's wail
And you'll have to cheese it or go to jail."

Sister's Summer Hat

My sister bought a summer hat,
The rim was three feet wide,
It had a doodad on in front
And feathers at the side;
She wore the hat to Sunday School,
She wore it to the show
And everywhere that sister went,
The hat was sure to go.

The plumage of the rooster,
The blue jay and the crow
Is gaudy and is glossy
And makes a heap of show;
The trappings of the ancient knight
Were made of burnished brass
And the way they used to glitter
There was nothing could surpass;
But there's naught in art or nature
That was ever seen before
That can start to hold a candle
To the hat that sister wore.

When she wore it out in public,
Folks were filled with wild dismay
For they couldn't see a box car
If that hat was in the way;
At church no one would sit behind
The pew where sister sat
For they could not see the preacher
Because of sister's hat;
And many of the brethren
Who were slightly under-size
Lost all the claim they ever had
To mansions in the skies,

BY ALBERT STROUD

And each was represented
Only by a vacant chair,
For they would not go to meeting
If sister's hat was there.

Now sister had a sweetheart,
As sisters sometimes do,
But the wide expansive headgear
Broke the love affair in two;
For when they went out strolling
To hold communion sweet
My sister walked upon the walk,
Her fellow in the street.

But sister does not worry,
Though all our folks are sad;
She does not seem to give a care
That every one is mad.
Perhaps she thinks it matters not
If people frown or smile
Or what they say about her hat
So long as it's in style.



At church no one would sit behind the pew where sister sat, for
they could not see the preacher because of sister's hat.

Exit J. Barleycorn

Sing a song of white mule, bottle full of rye ;
All the whole creation now is going dry.
Russia lost her vodka, Germany her schnapps ;
Soon there won't be any use in raising hops.

Brewer and distiller looking down their nose ;
Lots of kids and women wearing better clothes ;
Solons up in congress talking mighty strong
Of an anti-booze law, nation-wide-and-long.

Sentiment is changing everywhere you go ;
Fellow full of jag juice hasn't any show ;
Places in the old town where he used to drink
Do not want his quarter, cannot see him wink.

Factory and railroad advocate the can
As the proper token for the drinking man.
Spiritus frumenti, silo-soup and rum
Turn the handy genius to a useless bum.

Barleycorn, the monarch, soon will leave his throne,
Bootleg booze and jim-jams then will be unknown.
Sing a song of bug juice, make your biggest bluff ;
Soon will eight and forty states be as dry as snuff.

BY ALBERT STROUD

The Moving Season

We are moving down at our house there is chaos
everywhere;
We can see it in the prospect, we can feel it in the air.
There are blankets on the clothes-line and the porch
is piled with rugs,
We have kerosened the bedsteads to exterminate the
bugs.

I am searching for a weapon to extract a stubborn
screw,
But my neighbor cannot help me, 'cause his folks are
moving too.
'Tis the season for departing from the well accu-
stomed groove,
When the migratory microbe makes the women want
to move.

Yes, we're moving down at our house, we are going
to fly the coop;
There is bedlam in the kitchen, there are toothpicks
in the soup,
There are rain barrels in the parlor, filled with
divers kind of junk,
And we're sleeping in the cellar with a carpet for a
bunk.

Getting Back to the Farm

The cost of beef and bacon is getting mighty high,
The price of eggs and butter is soaring to the sky,
Our milk is so expensive that we only take a gill
And lest we drink too much at once we suck it
through a quill.

The cost of living is a theme that claims attention
now,
It even seems to have the bulge on Europe's family
row;
Our thoughts are turned from gas bombs and dirig-
ible balloons
While we ponder on the prospect of getting back to
prunes.

The men who guide the ship of state around the
shoals and wrecks
Are talking on the subject of causes and effects.
They seek to find the trouble and the remedy apply
That will keep the price of eatings from going up
so high.

They have juggled with statistics and performed a
little sum
And they tell us that production is completely on the
bum,
That the merchant and the banker and the printer
and the clerk
Must get out in the country and procure a job of
work.

They say the population now is drifting into town
And there must be some reaction to keep the prices
down;

BY ALBERT STROUD

Yea, from the hill and housetop they are spreading
the alarm,
That the way to save the nation is to get back to the
farm.

Then farewell to the city with its glamor and its
strife,
I am going to seek some rural scene and lead the
simple life.

I want to be a farmer and with the farmer stand,
With hayseed in my whiskers and a pitchfork in my
hand.

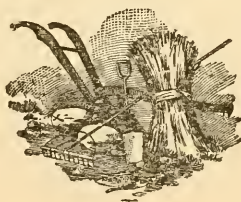
I will skiddoo back to nature and I'll buy a span of mules,

A husking peg and hayrake and other farming tools.
I will sow my fields in cabbage and when I thresh it
out

I will wreck the combination that controls our sour
krout.

I will plant the tiny hayseed and raise a crop of hay
Perhaps I'll keep a hen that lays a dozen eggs a day ;
I'll wipe the sweat from off my brow and bare my
strong right arm

And you'll see the prices tumble when I get back
to the farm.



Fishing Time

I often think I'll take a day and have some jolly
times,
I long to lay this pen away and quit these silly
rhymes;
I want to take my line and hook and go down to the
creek
And seek the most inviting hole and fish for near a
week.

But yet I know this impulse wild I must not carry out
For by it I am oft beguiled to paths of pain and doubt.
Because when I go out to fish I rarely get a bite
But sit there all day long and wish, then wander
home at night.

The turtles always get my bait as soon as I begin,
They gather round in droves and wait to watch me
throw it in;
And when I go to hunt some more and delve around
and toil,
The insects all have locked their door and gone down
in the soil.

I might dig down to bedrock firm and never get a
one,
I do not think I'd find a worm to hunt from sun to
sun;
But if there's any poison oak, I'll meet with that in-
stead
And then my face I have to soak in acetate of lead.

Mosquitoes come and buzz and sing and prod me
with their bills,

BY ALBERT STROUD

And yet I wonder every spring what makes me have
the chills.

So perish, fond delusion, no longer will I dream
Of quiet and seclusion along the babbling stream.

A CAT—ASTROPHE

Mary had a little cat
That bore the name of Izzy;
Upon a pole it climbed and sat
So high it made her dizzy.
Against a live electric wire
It touched its tail so fuzzy,
A little flash—a gleam of fire—
And now its name is Wuzzy.



Downfall of the Speed Fiend

Jim Jacobs was a fiend for speed,
And so he sold his spavined steed
And put a mortgage on his land
And borrowed cash on every hand;
Then with the money went and bought
Himself a rattly juggernaut.

At first he seemed contented when
He killed a neighbor's setting hen,
But as the passion stronger grew
He paralyzed a dog or two.

From bad to worse Jim quickly went
Upon his deadly mission bent,
Till he would wink and slyly laugh
When he could crush a yearling calf.

One day, while driving into town
He ran a horse and buggy down,
Then turned and charged with honking loud
Upon an inoffensive crowd,
Which filled the air with dying groans
And shrieks and wails and crunch of bones.

The sheriff came and captured Jim
And put the comealongs on him,
So now he languishes in jail
For lack of forty thousand bail.

No Time to Vote

A busy man was Jason Briggs
He had no time to vote.
He spent his days at weaning pigs
And building tanks and other rigs
To keep his ducks afloat.

I found him poking round his place
On last election day.
Says I: "'Tis well you saved your face
And kept your name from sad disgrace
And stayed the polls away.

"For I am told a bunch of thugs
Are pouring from their throats
Dire threats that they will punch the mugs
Of you and me and other plugs
Who try to cast their votes."

Old Briggses' eyes got very wide,
His face grew very red.
"What? take away the rights," he cried,
"For which our fathers fit and died!
I'm goin' to vote, by Ned."

A lot of men like Jason Briggs,
Who pass their duty by
And do not care a bunch of figs
Would waltz around like whirligigs,
Should we their rights deny.

Knocking the Doctor

When folks are feeling blithe and gay,
With ne'er an ache or pain,
They gad about the house all day
And chant this old refrain:

"The doctor is a useless wight,
His medicine a fake;
He doses me with aconite
To cure the stomach ache.

"Now there was Uncle Hiram's kid,
Whose name was Ezra Stout,
He had the measles, so he did,
But wouldn't blossom out.

"They sent for Dr. So-and-So
Who diagnosed the case
As rheumatiz and vertigo
And dropsy of the face.

"And then he sent an awful bill
Which showed he had the cheek—
I never have one when I'm ill
My faith in them is weak."

But when folks get to feeling blue
And have to go to bed,
With maybe just a chill or two
And dizzy in the head—

They swear they have the grip or bots
Or other fatal ills
And send right off for Dr. Watts
To come and feed them pills.

BY ALBERT STROUD

Legislative Superfluity

It's got to be so nowadays
There is a law for everything;
Our legislatures grind away
In winter time and bonny spring.
And every chap who has a squeal
Goes round and wags his under jaw
And hands you out this tiresome spiel:
"I think there ought to be a law."

Wild-eyed reformers, filled with dreams,
Orate till their suspenders burst,
But when they hatch their little schemes
They try them on their neighbors first.
They warn us on the village street
That we should change our minds and socks,
They tell us what we ought to eat
And how to set our eight-day clocks.
And if we will not stand their josh,
Resentment rises in their craw.
They say: "I guess you will, b' gosh!
Pervided we can git a law."

I find that I am that way too
And so I'll go to aid the cause
And try to get a law put through
To stop this fad of making laws.

Julius Caesar

I sometimes tire of daily news as dry exchanges
I peruse; I long to quit this sordid grind and seek a
tonic for the mind—to single out some classic, old,
wherein a wondrous tale is told of knights and wars
and mountain steeps and castles with their donjon
keeps.

Last night while ruminating round, upon the
mantelpiece I found some mental fodder, cut and
dried, which told how Julius Caesar died.

This Caesar was a Roman bold, who from his
wars brought slaves and gold. Now certain knockers
in the land united in a secret band and plotted how
to take his life, but fair Calphurnia, Caesar's wife, in
some way seemed to get a nudge that someone owes
her man a grudge, that Brutus, Cassius, and the rest
would stab him through his fancy vest. And Caesar,
musing on the way, thus to Marc Antony did say:

"Now, mark you, Marc, yon Cassius, mien; he is
too long and lank and lean. Give me big men who
sleep o' night, whose waistbands are extremely
tight." Thus portliness he did defend and proved
himself the Fat Man's friend.

The wary crew soon laid their plan and waited
long to get their man. "He is ambitious," Brutus
said; though thrice had Caesar shook his head, and
thrice the crown he did refuse. They murmured:
"Don't it beat the deuce? Did'st ever hear of such a
thing? He does not want the job of King. Perhaps
he seeks a higher place and thinks ere long to be the
Ace."

And so they shouted Caesar's name and ran their

BY ALBERT STROUD

daggers through his frame, till at their feet he fell
and died and they at last, were satisfied.

Marc Antony was Caesar's friend and got sweet
vengeance in the end and all of those who wrought
his doom, ere long had scooted up the flume.

THE PRODIGAL SON

The prodigal of scripture was a worthless sort of lad ;
He had the wanderitis and he had it awful bad ;
But when he balked on eating shucks and vowed no
more to roam

He got a lot of credit 'cause he hit the trail for home.
Yes, we hear about the prodigal and what a time he
had,

But nothing of the other boy, who didn't leave his
dad.

He was a patient charley-horse and stayed down on
the farm

To cuff the mules and split the wood to keep the
heater warm.

And when the absent hobo came and made his little
spiel,

The kid went out and skinned a calf, but brother
got the veal.

The Baby Sister

A little baby sister came to Willie's house one day,
By the Stork Route, straight from heaven, Willie
heard his Auntie say.

The little fellow did not know, nor could he under-
stand

Why any one should want to leave that bright and
happy land

And when he viewed the pinky face and little fuzzy
head

He looked as sober as a judge and to the infant said:

"You surely didn't come down here a lookin' for a
snap;

This world it aint no kind of place for such a weazly
chap.

My Mamma she is sick abed and Papa seems so blue;
I don't see how we'll get along with such a mite as
you.

"If you had been a brother I could take you out to
play,

But you are just a little girl and only in the way.

You ought to stayed up yonder with the angels fair
and bright;

Our preacher says that heaven beats this country out
of sight.

And if you live down here on earth with women folks
and men

BY ALBERT STROUD

You'll have to run the risk of ever gettin' back again."



NEW YEAR RESOLVES

I will not swear, I will not smoke, I will not crack a naughty joke, I will not drink a drop of booze, my temper I will never lose. I will not gamble, steal or lie nor cheat my neighbor on the sly, I'll help the poor with lavish hand and for the right will take my stand. I will not knock against my town, but try to keep dissension down, of people's faults I will not talk nor spit upon the floor or walk and thus distribute deadly germs; nor patronize mail order firms. I'll try to be a moral guide, a beacon, shining far and wide. I'll seek the right and shun the wrong and make this life one happy song. The virtuous path today I'll seek and walk in it—perhaps a week.

The Snorer

The golden summer weather is the time to swat the fly
And in the spring we long to see the dandelions die;
In winter there's the fellow who will foolishly entice
A poor benighted brother through a thin place in the ice.
It seems that every season has some things we'd rather miss;
Without them our existence would be one round of bliss.
But while we must endure them, there comes the thought sublime
That each will run its dreaded course in just a little time.
The things of short duration do not fret me any more
They are nothing to the fellow with the deep, redundant snore.
For the snorer is not governed by the changes of the moon;
'Tis every night throughout the year he sings his doleful tune,
And while he wildly saws the air it makes me toss and weep
And softly breathe a cuss word because I cannot sleep.
He goes from bass to treble and from treble back to bass,
The while I woo the drowsy god by lying on my face.
O, I long to see him wafted to the dark, Plutonian shore,
For my soul abhors the fellow with the syncopated snore.

House Cleaning Time

Backward, turn backward, O, time, in your flight
And give me the house that I slept in last night,
My bed in the corner so cozy and snug,
The chair and the couch and the beautiful rug.

They are vanished and gone like a tale that is told,
And the floor of the room looks so cheerless and cold.
For bedding I have but a thin gunny sack
And I shudder to move lest I step on a tack.

My dinner was cold and my supper was raw,
But I know it is useless to grumble and jaw;
For the house cleaning season has come once again
To wear out the patience of poor, helpless men.

I think every year I'll flee to some clime
And miss all the horrors of house cleaning time;
I long to go off for a dash to the pole
Or be sent to the pen and allowed to dig coal.

I fain would abide in some cannibal's camp
Or sleep in the jungles so darksome and damp;
To mountainous heights with delight I would climb
And stay there contented through house cleaning
time.

FOLLOWING SUIT

"'Tis mighty queer," said Ezra New,
"That when the snow leaves in the spring,
It's only just a week or two
Until the trees leave, too—by jing."

Hand-Me-Down Maxims

Ben Franklin was a wondrous sage
Who flourished in a former age;
He made a kite and flew it high
And yanked the lightning from the sky.
If he had stuck to tricks like that,
Upon his science standing pat,
His never dying memory
Would be a lot more dear to me.

But Ben was overwise and smart
And took himself too much to heart,
And wrote a lot of silly verse,
As bad as this and maybe worse,
To tell folks what they ought to do,
As if he thought that I or you
Would like to base our daily acts
Upon his blamed old almanacs.

Once, in an evil moment caught,
Down at the picture store I bought
A cardboard motto, in a frame,
And in my bedroom hung the same;
Which told me what great Ben had said,
That I must early go to bed
And in the morning early rise,
For that would make me rich and wise.
So when the twilight shadows came
Methought I'd buck his little game,
That I might walk in Wisdom's ways
And pile up wealth for future days.

I hung my pants across a chair
And sought my couch of gander hair
And there upon the bed I tossed

BY ALBERT STROUD

Till all my patience I had lost;
And counted ninety thousand sheep
Before I closed my eyes in sleep.

Ere long a pain across my lap
Awoke me from a troubled nap
And when the doctor came he said:
"You should not go so soon to bed;
Your evening meal did not digest
Which robbed you of your peaceful rest.
Three dollars, please, is what you owe
And if you'll pay me I will go."

I took that jinx down from the wall
And tossed it out into the hall.
And secretly I vowed that hence
I'd use a little common sense
And take no longer as a guide
Such foolish maxims, cut and dried.



The Summer of Umpity Steen

When the weather is hot and the river is dry
And the corn and the taters are yellow and sear,
Some windy old dub always raises the cry
And says "O, this isn't a very dry year.

"Now back in the summer of Umpity-steen
We sure had a drought that would open your eyes;
For days and for weeks and for months I have seen
Hot weather, with never a cloud in the skies.

"That there was the year when the rattlesnakes died
Beneath the hot rays of the merciless sun;
Full many a one have I et, ready fried,
As he lay in the pathway, deliciously done.

"They say that this dry spell beats anything yet
And quote you the figgers to prove it is true,
But I claim the weather is soggy and wet
Compared to the summer of Umpity-two.

"That season I broke forty acres of sod
With a pair of dun mules that couldn't be beat.
But I ruined 'em both just by keepin' 'em shod,
For their shoes got so hot that it roasted their feet.

"Don't talk of the river and ponds bein' low;
Why, back in the summer of Umpity-four
The Babtists was holding a camp meetin' show
And people come forrerd each night by the score.

"But when it was ended a fact come to light
That made them evangelists open their eyes;
They found themselves in a most sorrowful plight—
There wasn't no water for them to baptize.

BY ALBERT STROUD

"Then a young circuit rider of Wesleyan creed,
Who found how them converts was left in the lurch,
Made a forty mile journey down there on his steed
And roped 'em all into the Methodist church.

"No need to tell me that the season is hot;
I know what I know and I've seen what I've seen;
W'y it's pleasant compared to the weather we got
Back there in the summer of Umpity-steen."

CITY ELECTIONS

Election now is over and the votes are counted out, the victors are rejoicing to see the losers pout; the statesmen are selected to make the city's laws, the local politicians now may rest their weary jaws. The race is to the swiftest, the battle to the strong, their friends now slap them on the back, but soon they'll change their song. For there's one who wants a street light on the corner where he lives and one don't like the service his water meter gives; the sportsman will be wrathful if the marshal shoots his dog; the preacher wants a sidewalk built down past the synagogue; the merchant wants an ordinance to keep Ward Skeerluck out and to stop the vile intruder who peddles sour krout; the taxes are away too high, the crossings are too low and if they put the paving in where will the water go? There are lots of things need doing in each kick infested town but the man who undertakes them adds some stars unto his crown, for henceforth his earthly journey will be filled with grief and woe till he soars away to glory from this wicked world below.

Christmas Giving

The busy Christmas shopper
Considers it is proper
To join the crowd and rush into the thickest of the
 fray
And soak his summer wages
In quick, successive stages
To buy some presents for his friends on happy
 Christmas day.

The age in which we're living
Is an awful time for giving,
But the spirit that is prompting it may be entirely
 wrong;
Too often Christmas shopping
Is a sort of Christmas swapping
In a sort of favored circle where they pass the gifts
 along.

If I buy my aunts and cousins
Costly trinkets by the dozens
Or present my wealthy neighbor with a silver
 spittereen,
'Tis because of expectation
That there'll be reciprocation,
And I'll get a handsome runabout, propelled by
 gasoline.

The fellow who is needy,
Whose duds are old and seedy,
Gets little out of Christmas but a fresh supply of
 woes;

BY ALBERT STROUD

His children know no Santy
For his means are very scanty
And every cent that he can make must go for food
and clothes.

The real Christmas giving
That makes this life worth living
And shows that we are any use in this old world of
care
Is to give where it is needing
And pass not by unheeding
The wants of those around us who do not get their
share.

Some humble, little present
Or a smile that's warm and pleasant
Will please a child or cheer those hearts that oft for
kindness yearn
And will give more real pleasure
Than a ton of costly treasure
That we send our friends, expecting something better
in return.



The Calendar and the Girl

The men who sell us cheeses,
Who deal out dope for sneezes
And those who handle corner lots and blue sky min-
ing stock,
Who peddle books and papers
And lightning rods and tapers,
Are waiting now to greet us as we amble round the
block.

With faces kind and pleasant
They hand us out a present,
A calendar to warn us how the dizzy seasons whirl,
All filled with days and weather,
With moons and weeks together,
And there upon the cover is the picture of a girl.

Too soon are we encumbered
With souvenirs unnumbered;
The artists vie to please us with some forty kinds of
style.
Some long, and some are shorter
Some narrow—kinda sorter—
But the girl upon the cover greets us with the same
old smile.

The futurists and cubists
And some who must be rubists,
Who wear a wisp of new mown hay within their
tangled curls,
Are drawing princely wages
In quick, successive stages
By furnishing variety in calendars and girls.

BY ALBERT STROUD

Fair maids with auburn tresses
And spangles on their dresses;
Shy damsels wrapt in dimples—only this and nothing
more;
Sweet Janes in fuss and feather,
'Mid snow and stormy weather,
And angels, clad in bath suits, sporting on the sandy
shore.

We like the girls—God bless 'em,
Any way the artists dress 'em,
We gladly post their pictures in the parlor or the
hall;
They grace our summer kitchen,
With face and form bewitchin',
And we want a half a dozen hanging on the bedroom
wall.

But we crave some variation
In our scheme of decoration,
We'd like to have a calendar to hang out in the shed,
A straw stack or a plover
Upon the painted cover,
A forest fire or sunset, daubed in colors ruby red.

Can't some one draw a smoke-stack,
A hand car or a flapjack
A mountain or a mole hill, a sawmill or a squirrel
To decorate those doogies
That show how tempus fuges?
Just anything on earth except the picture of a girl.

The Pawpaw

The pawpaw grows out in the wood
Upon a little tree,
It has a flavor sweet and good
That quite agrees with me.
Its mushy meat I fain would gulp,
'Tis soothing to my soul;
It has brown seeds and juicy pulp,
A skin surrounds the whole.
I meet some folks upon life's road
Who do not like its taste
And if they had a wagon load
Would let them go to waste.
I might be able to conceive,
If I should firmly strive
How one might be content to leave
The pleasant family hive
And go out in the cruel world,
In loneliness to roam
Where disappointment's darts are hurled
And never think of home;
Or even how a man might learn
To love his mother-in-law,
But cannot see how one could spurn
The glorious pawpaw.
If I were rich as Morganheim
I'd buy a plot of land
And put in all my leisure time
Upon a project grand;
I'd set it out in pawpaw trees
And thus provide a treat,
That all the folks on land and sea
Might have enough to eat.

BY ALBERT STROUD

The Legislature

Oh, we have a legislature at Topeky,
There are men with noses keen and voices squeaky;
 There are those whose steps are slow
 And whose tones are soft and low,
And all appear to have some notions freaky.

The bills that they present, their name is oodles,
They are working out a recipe for noodles;
 They would fain forbid our dears
 Wearing doo-dads in their ears,
And they want to put a tax on sore-eyed poodles.

For fewer county offices they beller,
Till they've scared the court house "rats" into the
 cellar,
 Where each one has agreed
 It is just the thing we need,
Provided they will can the other feller.

They seem to have poor luck at legislating,
But expect to do some tall appropriating;
 If their promises they spurn,
 They can anyway adjourn
And let the taxes go on aviating.

But let's be calm and face it without squealing
And calmly play the hand that they are dealing;
 If they only wag their jaws
 And refrain from passing laws,
There wont be such a bunch to need repealing.

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

School Day Memories

I used to be a pedagog of country school degree,
I used to spank the trowsled kid across my bended
knee,
I used to teach some thirty brats for six months in
the year
And sweep the floor and build the fires for forty
dollars per.

I sit today and weave these rhymes and thank my
lucky stars
I do not have to hunt for verbs for busy brains to
parse,
I do not eat cold lunch at noon and wade the mud
and snow;
I gave up all those dreary things a dozen years ago.

And yet, when summer days are gone and autumn
comes apace,
An impulse springs within my soul, usurping reason's
place.
The sun is slanting to the south, the days are clear
and cool
And something seems to tell me that I'd like to teach
a school.

A vision flits across my mind—a school house small
and white,
With many a knot hole in the wall and broken win-
dow light,

BY ALBERT STROUD

A lane that came up from the south, with sunflowers
blossoming high
And tufts of yellow goldenrod, delightful to the eye.

I like to think those boys and girls who gathered
round my knee
Are better men and women now for going to school
to me
And as they rise to conquer in this world of smile and
strife
I only hope I had a part in helping them through life.

It seems as years go floating by on wings so sure and
fleet
There's something blots the bitter out and leaves
me all the sweet;
For memory can't be trusted if once we give her rein,
She brings us all our pleasures back and buries all
our pain.

THE WARM WEATHER NUISANCE

They're at the cemetery
Planting Christopher McGrew
Who asked a pilgrim, weary:
"Is it hot enough for you?"

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

The National Guard

We used to call 'em "dough boys," "tin soldiers" and
the like
We used to holler "Hayfoot!" when they went out
on a hike,
We couldn't understand what we were paying taxes
for
To drill a bunch of soldiers when there wasn't any
war.

We looked upon their practice with a heap of solemn
scorn,
We said they ought to stay at home and plow the
weedy corn,
We aped their awkward motions when they fumbled
a salute,
And asked them what their guns were for and who
they meant to shoot.

Sometimes on Decoration Day we let them march
along
And tag the great procession of a patriotic throng,
But generally we met them with a snicker or a frown
And never looked upon them as an asset to the town.

But now it seems a change has come o'er Hicksburg
on the plain,
Our boys are followed by the band while marching
to the train.

BY ALBERT STROUD

They know what they are up against and seem to
think it fun,
While the band down at the depot plays "Johnny Get
Your Gun."

At last we found a place for them to prove their real
worth;
They're the fairest of ten thousand and the flower
of the earth.
When Uncle Sam was short on men and up against
it hard
The call to go against the foe was answered by the
guard.



IT WAS A CHURCH WEDDING

The bride came tripping down the aisle,
Upon her features was a smaisle.
Beside her walked the trembling groom,
His face as solemn as the toom.

A Plea for the Mule

In history and poetry, in music and in art
The horse has been a favored beast and played a
 leading part,
And while I don't begrudge him the fame that he
 has won,
There's been too little said about his sister's long
 eared son.

We praise the foaming charger and weave him in a
 song,
But how about the humble beast that hauls the grub
 along?
He snakes the heavy cannon o'er muddy field and
 road
And is never known to whimper or complain about
 his load.

In times of peace as well as war the mule is not a
 shirk.
When Dobbin takes a balky spell, it's Jasper does
 the work.
In many ways he proves himself much wiser than
 the steed
He never takes an overdose of water or of feed;
And should he chance to run away when by ambition
 fired,
He always makes his dash with care and stops be-
 fore he's tired.

BY ALBERT STROUD

I know there is a prejudice against this humble beast
But those who hold him with disdain are they that
know him least.

Investigate his record with a calm, unbiased mind
And you will find, as I have found, that he has been
maligned.

For even men who hold him up to scorn and ridicule
Might learn a wholesome lesson from the humble,
patient mule.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY

“Will you walk into my parlor?” said the spider to the fly; but the cunning little insect only winked the other eye and he knowingly retorted in a buzz so low and sweet: “Well, not upon your half-tone, I have learned to watch my feet. I have a load of small-pox on my silken little wings, my legs are lined with typhus germs and other deadly things. I am taking some bacilli to a house across the way and you must not try to stop me, for I have no time to play.”

Once more the spider pleaded in accents soft and low: “Won’t you step into my parlor and rest before you go? My web is lined with gossamer of texture fine and rare and you’ll find some lovely microbes if you will enter there. I have a nice collection I am saving just for you, and I want to seal our friendship with a B. Coli or two.”

“With all my heart,” replied the fly and straightway walked inside and the spider got his dinner and was fully satisfied.

The Parade Habit

It used to be in strenyus times when things was r'iled
a bit
We'd gather round the grocery stove an' argify an'
spit;
But now our mouths we do not shoot, our backs we
do not arch,
For when we wish to make our p'int, we jist git out
an' march.

The fellers who are strong for peace, who fear war's
dread alarm,
They lay aside their labors now in store or shop or
farm
An' form theirselves in solid ranks along the busy
street
To prove that they are in the right by workin' of
their feet.

Likewise the guys who say this land is wholly unpre-
pared,
Who think the mollycoddles are all asleep or scared,
They mass their solid columns within the marts of
trade
An' hoof it down the avenue an' give a big parade.

The gals who b'leeve in sufferage are trampin' out
the votes,
The labor unions walk to show how mammon got
their goats;

BY ALBERT STROUD

We have no use for orators our the'ries to expound,
We'd ruther go an' hire a band an' foller it around;

We do not quote authorities to show that we are right
When we go in for buildin' roads or puttin' booze to
flight,
An' if some othér feller's scheme we want to give a
knock,
We simply gather up a crowd an' hayfoot round the
block.

THE SUCCESSFUL FAILURE

Bill Budlong of Ranikaboo
Had nothing whatever to do;
Each job that he tried he bungled and pied,
Till he had to get up and skiddoo.

He started to work for himself,
But he never could corner the pelf;
His head was so lame his creditors came
And laid his affairs on the shelf.

Now Bill would occasionally mix
With the men who were in politics;
So Tom, Dick and Bob created a job
The future of William to fix.

They made him the Big Gazaboo,
The Rajah of Ranikaboo.
Ten dollars a day he draws as his pay
And he has very little to do.

He rules like a king on his throne
And the depth of his gall is unknown.
He can teach millionaires to run their affairs
Though he never could manage his own.

Gardening By Almanac

Jim Jacobs owned a plot of ground;
He fenced it carefully around
And spread it thick with rich manure,
Its fertile nature to insure.

He ordered packs of garden seeds,
Of nice, clean strain and free from weeds;
He worked away with rake and hoe
And formulated bed and row,
Then sat him down to rest his back
And read Hostetter's almanac.

For Jim was ancient in his ways,
He went by seasons, signs and days;
From February until June
His acts were governed by the moon.

The while the spring was clear and fair
He lingered in his easy chair,
And feared to sow his crop of peas
Because the sign was in the knees.

He frittered golden hours away
And waited for St. Patrick's day,
And then he could not plant a spud
Unless he slopped around in mud.

When favored by the Zodiac,
The frigid weather held him back,
Till he lost out on stringless beans
And failed on raising mustard greens.

While waiting for the moon to phase
The time went by for early maize,
And summer came and then the fall
And Jacobs raised no crop at all.

The Call of the Brook

Whene'er a gentle shower falls
And lures the red worms from the soil
A still, small voice from somewhere calls
And bids me quit insipid toil.

I want to take a line and hook,
A can of wiggly, squirming bait,
And mope off to the burbling brook
Where hungry bullheads stand and wait.

The green upon the graceful elm,
The red-bird singing in the tree,
The tadpole as he ports his helm
Are all of interest to me.

This angling is a sport for kings,
It beats baseball and mumbly pegs;
It makes dull care sprout eagle wings
And knocks the spavin from my legs.

And as I hit the homeward route
'Tis sweet to think, at eventide,
When I have yanked their innards out
How nice those fish will be when fried.

I like their flavor, it is true
But if I do not get a bite,
I feel most any way but blue
As I go tramping home at night.

For narrow is the soul of him
Whose only concept of success
Hangs on the proposition, slim,
Of whether he can catch a mess.

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

Requiescat In Partes

Jim Jacobs owned a motor car that sped along like
blazes,
And many were the noble men he put beneath the
daisies;
They warned him and they pinched him but he went
his way unheeding,
And nothing seemed to satisfy his mania for speeding.

For splintered bone and quaking flesh the villain
seemed to hanker,
He crippled up a section boss and massacred a
banker,
And when a circus came to town and through the
street paraded,
He bore down like a juggernaut and had a cyclone
faded.

He bumped into the monkey cage, he busted up the
kirmess,
He fractured all the ribs inside the monster pachy-
dermus,
He killed a Spanish matador who came from Casa
Loma,
And when the cops got on his track he fled to
Oklahoma.

Across the oil fields he sped, his purpose never
flaggin',
And bumped some nitroglycerin upon a shooter's
wagon.
The shock that followed scattered him all over forty
acres,
They never could have picked him up with fifty
undertakers.

BY ALBERT STROUD

Kind hearted men, who delve for oil upon surrounding leases,
Set up a slab and on it wrote this legend:

“REST IN PIECES.”

BABY BYE—REVISED

Baby Bye, here's a fly,
Let us swat him, you and I;
See him crawl up the wall,
Aint he got a lot of gall?
Now he goes on his toes,
Spreading germs o'er Baby's nose.
Baby Bye, swat the fly,
Soak the villain hip and thigh;
He is like Pandora's box,
Full of mumps and chicken-pox.
See, he scatters in his wake
Grip and croup and stomach-ache.
Get a sheet of tangle-foot,
Screens upon the window put;
Do not let the little fly
In the room with Baby Bye.

Taking Vacations

Old Rockebilt has lots of dough
And wants for nothing here below ;
He has a mansion rich and rare,
With walnut floor and marble stair,
An uptown office, grand and gay,
In which he spends an hour a day.
And while I never saw him do
What looks like work to me and you,
Yet strange to say, within his breast
There dwells the strong desire for rest.

Whene'er the summer comes apace,
He hikes to hunt a cooler place ;
From June the first till early fall
He trots around this earthly ball
And visits cities o'er and o'er
He's seen a dozen times before.

He spends a week in Santa Fe,
Then takes a swim in Baffin Bay,
And straightway flits across the foam,
Some twenty thousand miles from home,
To gaze upon the same old Alps
Or view a lot of martyr scalps,
Stacked in a musty catacomb
Upon the site of ancient Rome.

When Rockebilt gets home once more
The autumn days are almost o'er
And he must seek a warmer clime,
Before the rigid winter time
Comes on to chase the goose flesh out
And bring again a twinge of gout.

BY ALBERT STROUD

He sends a call by telephone
To somewhere in the torrid zone
And hires a suite of forty rooms
Where nature wears eternal blooms;
Then up he gets and off he goes
To where it never sleets or snows.

And so it goes, year after year.
He wont stay there he can't stay here;
He never seems to think it best
To take a rest from hunting rest.

I can't afford to gad around
Through Mozambique and Puget Sound;
I have not that amount of cash
To warrant me in such a dash.
Beside I think the man who stays
Upon the job through trying days
Has lots more pleasure when by chance
He gets to don his Sunday pants
And pack his duds into a grip
To start off on his humble trip.

I go down where I used to stay,
A score of miles or so away,
Which seems to me is better far
Than traipsing off to Zanzibar.
Then all the folks I used to know
Walk up and shake and say hello
And call me by my forward name
And say I'm looking just the same.

I find that country grub a treat
For folks at home have lots to eat;
I join the kids and play at catch,
I hunt the watermelon patch,
Or hang around the cider mill
With cup to catch the nut-brown rill.

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

I cut a lot of slender poles
To try out all the fishing holes
And when at eventide I bring
A mess of bullheads on a string,
I'm just as proud of what I got
As though I owned a fussy yacht
And caught a whale in Zuyder Zee
Or slew a moose in Tennessee.

HEREDITARY CRIME

There used to be traitors and liars and thieves and men who would plunder and kill and people imagined their devilment came because of their own wicked will. But now it is proven such logic is false, they were moved by some subtle desire, a mania possessed them that they had acquired from mother or granddad or sire. There was Judas Iscariot, whose name we abhor; perhaps he was not such a scamp, his ancestors may have been miserly men and left on their offspring this stamp. And Benedict Arnold, who sold this fair land to the forces of old Johnny Bull, might have had a big load of dementia on hand that he was unable to pull. That Ananias-Sapphira affair that raised such a terrible row—if given a chance on a perjury charge they could plead mythomania now.

The Assessor

The busy assessor is out on his beat
And craves your attention awhile,
So when he approaches you, try to keep sweet
And answer his questions and smile.

He wants to find out what your property's worth
And how much you have in the bank;
The month and the day and the year of your birth;
And what is your station and rank;

How many dill pickles you planted last year;
The number of hen eggs you get;
What you do when the weather is pleasant and clear,
And when it is soggy and wet.

He counts all the dogs and the children in sight
And asks if you have any more.
Does you wife raise a row when you stay out at night?
Have you ever been married before?

A book and a pencil and paper he brings,
With questions conned over by rote
And asks you a million and forty-four things
About like the samples I quote.

So try to be truthful, though others have lied,
And if you don't know, make a guess.
There's no use in trying your secrets to hide
From the man who comes round to assess.

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

When Willie Jined the Band

There's Willie, he's our youngest son,
He went to town to work;
'Twas in his uncle's livery barn
He got a job as clerk.
He wasn't like the other boys,
His brothers Jeff and Harm;
He 'lowed he'd never kill himself
A workin' on a farm.

We hadn't got no word from him
Till one day Silas Brown,
Who allus stops to chat awhile
When he comes home from town,
He stops his horse and says to me
"Well, Zeke, I understand
That that there boy, Bill, of yours
Has went and jined the band."

I didn't think it strange at all
And neither did his Ma;
He could make a jews-harp jingle
On "Turkey In The Straw."
At singin' school when all the rest
Would sit around and grin,
Will laid aside his bashfulness
And boldly waded in.

The Fourth was only three days off;
We hadn't planned to go,
'Cause we had lots of corn to plow
And lots of weeds to hoe,
But we finally decided
To celebrate the day,
And more especial when we learned
The band was goin' to play.

BY ALBERT STROUD

When we drove in the picnic grounds
The band was on parade;
It kinder quickened up my pulse
To hear the tunes they played.
And when our Willie marched along,
Dressed in his uniform,
It sorter throwed me off my base
And took my wits by storm.

I almost thought that he was me
In my old suit of blue;
My mind went back to other days—
The days of ' sixty two—
I heard once more the tune they played
In years that's gone before:
"We're coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more."

The waving flags, the beating drums,
The screaming of the fife,
All took me backward through those days
Of fratricidal strife.

The wildest notes of war's alarm
Kept chasin' through my brain;
It didn't seem like me at all
Till I got home again.



“Nothing in the Paper”

“There’s nothing in the paper” is a very common
phase;
Perhaps it may have come to us from pre-diluvian
days.
No doubt when Noah and his sons were fitting up
the ark,
The folks who read the Daily Squawk would sit
around and bark
And wonder why the editor devoted gobs of space
To a cranky preacher-carpenter with whiskers on
his face.

“There’s nothing in the paper,” the sad subscriber
groans,
“Except that Mrs. Isaac Smith is calling on Miss
Jones,
Or Jinks has roofed his hen house or cut his crop of
weeds,
Or that Schnickelfritz, the grocer, sells farm and
garden seeds.”

When there has been a holocaust, a murder or a fight,
The reader takes an interest, you see his features
light;
He yells unto his neighbor who lives across the way:
“Why don’t they give us news like that to read about
each day?”

He does not seem to realize that when the paper
lacks
The headlines, red and screaming, with their toll of
grewsome facts,

BY ALBERT STROUD

That everything is lovely with neighbor, friend and
foe
And the town is jogging onward in the way it ought
to go.

So when you find no rank detail of some revolting
caper
Just fold it up and thank the Lord "There's nothing
in the paper."

KEEPING UP THE INTEREST

Mary had a little calf—
In fact she had a pair—
But the fellows couldn't see them
For the clothes she used to wear.

So Mary shortened up her skirts,
Her gambrels to display,
And proudly marched along the streets
To paralyze the jay.

Eftsoons she lost the power
The loafers to bewitch,
For they had grown accustomed
To seeing legs and sich ;

So she togged her underpinnings
In thin and gauzy hose
And shoes so low they only served
To cover up her toes.

When these at last had spent their charms
The gazers to debauch,
She tried the latest recipe
And bought an ankle watch.

The Reformed Reformer

Gid Fluke has turned evangelist,
The devil's tail he likes to twist;
He tells upon the street each day
How he was once a cast-away.
And thousands come as he exhorts,
Who shed big tears when he cavorts,
And wonder at the change that's come
O'er such a booze-besotted bum.

This world is full of sin and woe,
And ministers are scarce, I know;
I might go out and snatch the brands
That now are grasped in Satan's hands,
But, sad to say, when I was young
No cuss-words slid from off my tongue,
I did not fall a prey to drink
And down into the gutter sink,
Nor patronize a gambling hell,
That I in later years might tell
The story of my early woes,
And proudly show my flaming nose.

For I was taught that what we sowed
When starting out upon life's road,
The same we'd reap in after years;
That vice would bring us bitter tears.
While, if we walked in virtue's ways,
A plenteous peace would bless our days.
And so I went to Sunday School
And tried to live the Golden Rule;
Quite confident when I was grown
A long-tailed coat should be my own;

BY ALBERT STROUD

That in the pulpit I should stand
And sound the gospel through the land;
While Gid, with other sinful chaps,
Was in a box car shooting craps.

But now I toil for meager pay
At humble tasks the livelong day,
While Gid is hoarding big, fat rolls
By saving countless sinners' souls.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Mamie and Mabel and Mary and Grace,
They went off to school in a very swell place
In a week came a letter signed "Your own Maymye,
I'm having a time and I know you don't blayme me."
The second young miss on a postcard wrote "May-
belle"

And added "I'll send more as soon as I'm aybelle."
Some other folks heard from their darling Marie
Who was happy, she said, as a bird on a trie.
And last but not least came a message from Grayce
Who said "I am firmly attached to this playce."

Everything Is High

Have you noticed what a contest
Has been going on of late?
Every blessed thing around us
Seems to want to aviate.

Airship men are fighting, striving,
For the greatest altitude
And we all are quite familiar
With the current price of food.

Now the fashions are decreeing
Higher hems for misses' skirts;
Some among the latest models
Would not do for decent shirts.

In this age of aviating
Men are mounting to the breeze,
And the girls are wearing dresses
That will hardly hide their knees.

Every season finds them shorter
And it's time to call a halt,
Ere the blasts of rude November
From the polar regions vault.

If the girls keep on undressing
At the rate they have this fall,
Ere the snow of winter strikes them
They will have no skirts at all.

BY ALBERT STROUD

A Tussle With Grip

On a winter evening dreary while I hovered, dreamy, weary, by the fireside warm and cheery, thawing out by marrow bones, suddenly there came a feeling up my spinal column stealing, like an icy tape unreeling through my lumbar-dorsal zones. "Tis some vagrant breeze," I murmured, "that around my casement moans in such dismal undertones."

Soon my noodle started aching like my cranium was breaking, soon my frame with pain was quaking from the shoulder to the hip. With a vengeance almost killing I was seized with sudden chilling and I said: "I'll bet a shilling that I've got the proper tip." So far on my pilgrim journey I had given it the slip, but I knew I had the grip.

Very well do I remember how I spent that bleak December with an ache in every member of this mortal frame of mine. Days were spent in morbid moping, nights were given up to doping, till I had no heart for hoping that the sun would ever shine. "When, O, when," I asked despairing, "can I quit this dope of mine—pills and squills and turpentine?"

Now I feel a little stronger since the days are getting longer and I see a feathered singer sitting out upon a tree, telling me that spring is coming that will start the bees to humming and I find that I am summing up the joy 'twill bring to me. For I have a sort of notion that I'm on the Wellville trip—that this grip ere long will slip.

VERDIGRIS VALLEY VERSE

High Water Time

River, river, little river,
Bright you sparkle on your way,
While the tadpoles dance and quiver
And upon your bosom play.

River, river, muddy river,
There has been a little rain,
And it makes me shake and shiver,
Lest there come some more again.

Little river, how you wander
Over all the countryside,
Filling fields and barns and houses
With your creeping, lapping tide.

There are turtles in the cellar,
There are bullfrogs in the well,
And the hickory shads are playing
Over in the bosky dell.

Tell me, little river, tell me
Why you clamber o'er the bank,
Filling all the land with dampness
And a smell so loud and rank.

River, river, raging river,
Full of mud and drift and slime,
Like the bile upon the liver
During watermelon time.

BY ALBERT STROUD

It Isn't Any Snap

The poet leads a strenuous life as through the world
he goes,
He has to keep his kids and wife in victuals and in
clothes;
He works throughout the livelong day to build a little
rhyme
And all his genius flies away before 'tis dinner time.
The lonely watches of the night he spends awake in
bed
But cannot join his words aright because the muse
has fled.

When slow success his efforts crown and he has
built a verse
Then everybody in the town agrees it aint so worse.
They ask: "However do you make your thoughts like
rivers flow?
You have the gift of Billy Shake, who flourished long
ago.
Why don't you write your news in rhyme and fill the
daily sheet
With tales of love and mirth and crime, done up in
stanzas neat?
Why don't you write the ads that way and tell us
where to go
To buy our boots and beans and hay and tickets for
the show?
Say wont you make some poetry about the Kameroons
To read at missionary tea on Thursday afternoons?"

They seem to think a poet's mind is like a sorghum
tank
And all he has to do is grind out verses with a crank.

The Three Fishers

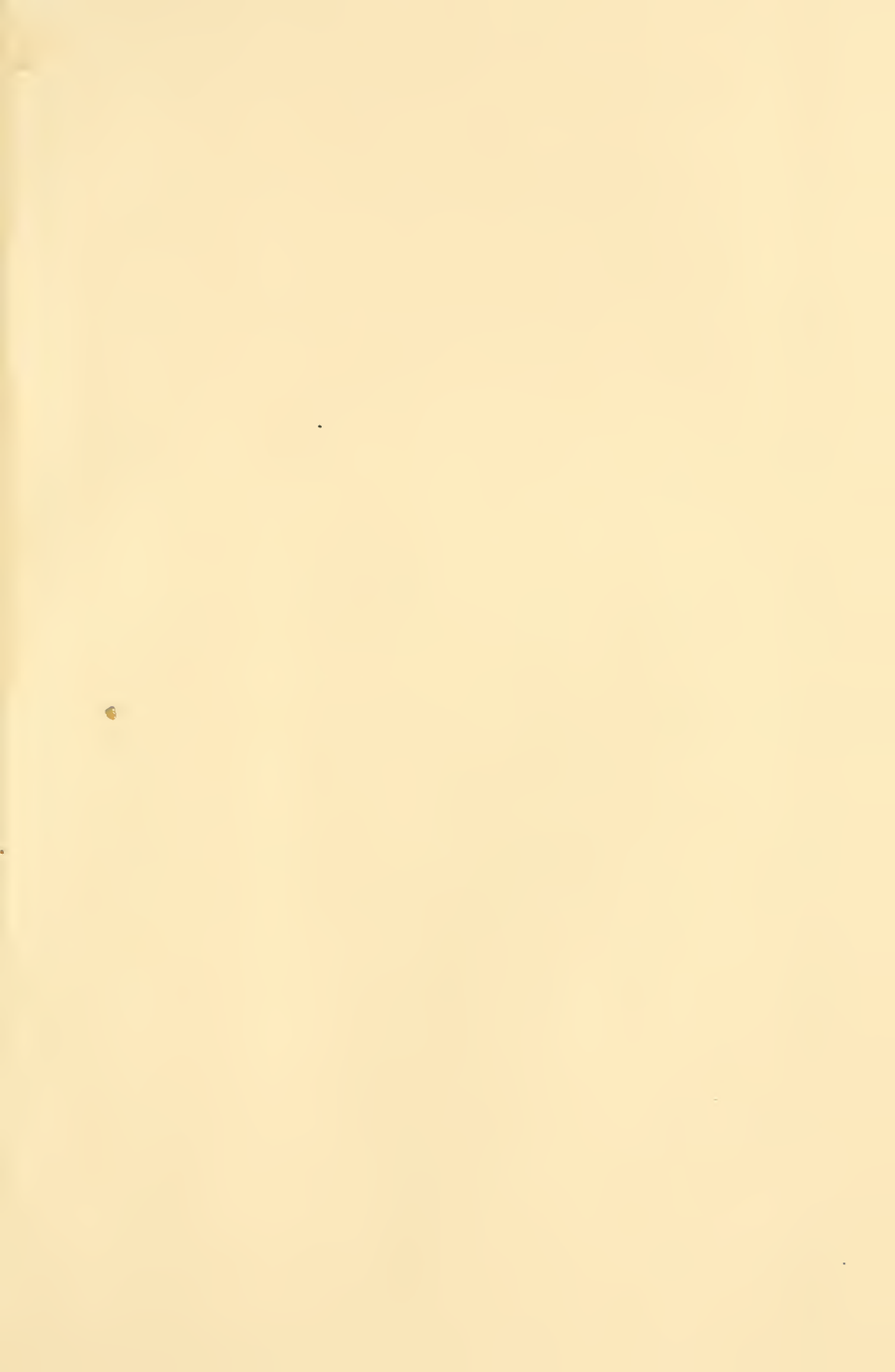
Three fishers went strolling away to the creek,
Away to the creek as the sun went down.
'Twas a summer night at the end of the week
And their wives stood watching them out of town.
For men will fish while the women wait,
And there's no telling what they will take for bait
When they stroll away in the gloaming.

The night went by and they did not come;
Three anxious women set out on their tracks,
And they found their husbands so cold and dumb,
So still and pale on the flat of their backs.
For men will fish till they get full of booze,
Then all of their senses they quickly lose
And their wits go far a-roaming.

Three fishers went sneaking away to their homes,
Away to their homes in the early dawn,
With a throbbing pain in each of their domes
And three mad women to urge them on.
And when their friends asked what they caught,
They turned away and they answered naught,
For they thought of the beer and its foaming.



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